

**ED 4352 – Poetry K-12 – How To Introduce A Poem – Various Approaches**  
*Resources for Planning & Engaging Students in the Reading of Poetry*

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**Poet's Advice on What Not to Do with Poetry** (Lockward, 1994)

- ✓ Do not explain the poem to students.
  - ✓ Do not give tests on poetry.
  - ✓ Do not be overly concerned with techniques.
  - ✓ Do not approach a poem with historical matters.
  - ✓ Do not impose the critics on students
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**Poet's Advice on How to Teach Poetry** (Lockward, 1994)

- ✓ Expose students to beautiful, powerful language.
  - ✓ Allow time for multiple oral readings of a poem.
  - ✓ Lead discussions that encourage a personal relationship with a poem.
  - ✓ Teach contemporary poetry first and then go backwards in time.
  - ✓ Teach poems you don't fully understand.
  - ✓ Teach poems that are accessible to students.
  - ✓ Allow students to sometimes choose their own poems.
  - ✓ Provide opportunities for students to write poetry.
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**Student Questions to Ponder Regarding Poetry** (Craig Czury 1994)

- ✓ What's the poem remind you of?
  - ✓ What did you think about while listening to it?
  - ✓ Where did your mind go?
  - ✓ Has anything been said in the poem to remind you of something in your life?
  - ✓ What pictures did this poem give you? And what feelings do you get from those pictures?
  - ✓ Does the poet bring up ideas you'd like to further ask him/her about? Ideas you've often thought about yourself?
  - ✓ How does the poem make you feel? And what has ever happened in your life that has left you with a similar feeling?
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**How To Read A Poem - James Winn**

1. Read the poem out loud. Ignore problems of meaning for now; listen to the sounds of the words. Notice the rhyme scheme; identify the meter; look for alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia. What patterns of recurrence does the poem display? What is its form?
2. Now ignore form and read the poem as if it were prose. Restore oddly ordered words to more normal prose order. Who is the speaker? Whom is he addressing? Can you paraphrase his meaning? Look up any words or names whose meaning you don't know.
3. Now focus on poetic kinds of meaning. What are the most important similes and metaphors in the poem? Do they fit together? How many kinds of meaning do they have? What is tone of the poem? Is it tender, ironic, serious,



sneaky? Are the meanings you are now discovering in contrast with those from the prose paraphrase you made in step 2?

4. Now read the poem aloud again, trying to notice as many aspects of its construction as you can at once. Does the form affect the meaning? Are rhyming words important words? Do separate lines contain separate thoughts? How does the whole construct work? Does it affect you?

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### Poetry Small-Group Discussion

(Based on Interpretive Communities *Bridging English* Chapter 5)

#### ***Interpretive Community***

Students too often regard classroom discussions of literature as a way of bludgeoning texts into insensibility. There are alternative ways for students to talk collectively about literature that enable them to shape their personal responses into textual interpretation within an interpretative community.

When students begin that communal sharing, the multiplicity of interpretations widens individual perspectives and unseats the idea that any one reading is the definitive reading. Here is a simple pattern that will work in your classrooms. It is addressed to the student.

1. Assemble yourselves into groups of five.
2. Choose one group member who will lead the discussion and then report your accounting of the poem to the whole class.
3. Have one group member read the poem aloud.
4. Everyone should then read the poem silently.
5. Each group member then gives his or her initial reaction, feeling, or observation about the reading. Do not remark on anyone's thoughts until everyone has had their turn at speaking.
6. Once everyone has spoken, you can then engage in a shared discussion about the poem and endeavour to arrive at some sense of its meaning.
7. If your discussion lags, return to the text to re-read a line, sentence, or stanza to deepen further your understanding of the poem.
8. Any time you reach an impasse, return to the text of the poem. Re-read the entire poem at least once during your discussion.
9. After 20 minutes of discussion, consolidate your ideas and prepare an account of the reading to share with the whole class.

#### **Whole Class Variation**

1. Listen and follow along as I read the poem.
2. I need one student volunteer to read the poem again for the class.
3. After the readings, we'll discuss briefly any unfamiliar words or phrases.